



My Christmas Story – A Message of Hope and Joy for Millions

Greetings,

This is truly a blessed Christmas. The Rotary Club of Tulsa, Sunrise gave me a very special gift this year. The gift is the wonderful personal fellowship you gave Craig Lenz, our widely known and highly respected Rotarian friend from Saskatchewan, Canada. Merry Christmas to you.

Many of you now know that Craig is a genuine Rotarian Hero. Those who met Craig at the Christmas party and the MSNI workday were as charmed by him as I am. Craig had the privilege of seeing the internationally known Men of Note perform, and he visited the Rotary Club of Tulsa, the Seventh largest Rotary club in the world. Craig really enjoyed his stay in Tulsa.



Craig does not see himself as a hero. Craig will tell you that he is first and foremost a farmer and inventor.

Craig is also a pilot. Tragically, 23 years ago, while Craig was crop dusting, he hit a power line and crashed. He is paralyzed from the waist down and has been in a wheelchair ever since.

Craig has not missed a planting or harvesting in the past 22 years. As an inventor, he developed hand controls for both the car rental

industry and for piloting airplanes. His unfortunate experience did not slow him down.

Craig's Rotary experience includes working closely with several companies serving humanitarian needs specializing in donated wheelchairs. He travels the third world extensively. Craig knows the needs, the highs and the lows of wheelchair recipients.

Craig is so driven by his unfortunate experience he even conducts business by phone conference while driving his combine! Craig has fueled the fire of my passion for filling the needs of the immobile that was first lit in 2006.

My torch of dedication to purpose involving wheelchairs was first passed at a meeting many of you will recall. It was at Ti Amo's. The meeting featured Steve Stocks and wheelchairs. Stocks informed us of the need for rugged wheelchairs that meet the rigors of the off-road world and shared his story of his program setting up small manufacturing operations to build them. In 2007 I was sidelined for three months due to illness. During my Rehab time, I studied wheelchairs intensively. I focused on Steve Stocks' guidance. Just as off road Humvees and Fiats are made for the rugged terrain, a wheelchair must also be made for the environment.

Learning of my commitment to the development of a genuine All Terrain Wheelchair, Craig, through mutual friends in the wheelchair design engineering fraternity, introduced himself to me.



Craig at the Sunrise MSNI workday



Sunrise Christmas Party

THE REST OF THE STORY.

Knowing the value of a wheelchair Craig was excited to discover the Wheelchair Foundation and the opportunity to help folks in less resourced countries. Craig became a spokesman for the Wheelchair Foundation, a popular vendor that is well known in the Rotary world. He became heavily involved with fund-raising for them. At a Rotary meeting that Craig was a speaker for (fund-raising for the Wheelchair Foundation), the district governor was so impressed with Craig's session that he invited Craig to become a Rotarian. He has been a member of the Rotary Club of Regina Eastview in Saskatchewan Canada for five years now.

Craig finally had the opportunity that he was looking forward to and that was to go on a wheelchair distribution in Rwanda. He helped in the distribution of 1400 wheelchairs there. As fate would have it, the area Craig went to was an area that the Wheelchair Foundation had been to in the past. It was there that a lady arrived in a wheelchair that was in very bad condition (shown in the picture to the right). Craig asked how old the wheelchair was and she said less than two years. The lady asked Craig if she could get a new chair. Fortunately they had one he was able to give her but Craig wondered about all the other people whose wheelchairs had worn out and what they were doing to fix their chairs. Craig searched the village for the spare parts that the Wheelchair Foundation sends with their chairs. The spare parts were nowhere to be found. In third world countries, people are hungry and anything that can be sold quickly disappears.



When Craig returned from his trip he contacted the Wheelchair Foundation headquarters and requested spare parts to service the wheelchairs that were broken down in Rwanda. He was told that there is no system in place to provide spare parts as it is easier just to provide another chair. Craig knows the reality of the answer he got... the chances of a wheelchair recipient receiving a second wheelchair in their lifetime is not good.

Craig was unable to convince the Wheelchair Foundation to take responsibility for their wheelchairs and started a project on his own to retrofit worn out Wheelchair Foundation chairs with improved repair parts and put them back in service. Craig teamed up with a group at San Francisco State University to work on this project. Coincidentally this is also the group that I discovered while researching the design for an All Terrain Wheelchair.

Craig taught me the true noble purpose of our service. Our primary mission is not supplying wheelchairs. Our primary mission is a personal responsibility to the wheelchair recipient.

When a Rotarian or other benefactor gives a wheelchair to an individual, we take on a long term commitment. Craig reminds me often that it is better not to give a wheelchair at all if we are not going to take on the responsibility to keep it in service. Once a person experiences the freedom of mobility, and then loses their freedom, their life is even more miserable than before.

Currently the Wheelchair Foundation is shipping a container a day of what is called a *Portering Wheelchair* also known as, "temporary wheelchairs." Temporary wheelchairs are ones that are designed for temporary use. Examples of uses would include hospitals where regulations require that a patient be wheeled around or retirement homes where residents must be wheeled from



Craig in Rwanda examining discarded wheelchairs



Retrofitted WF wheelchair

a transportation unit to their room. Those with minimal resources can use a temporary chair if the world they find themselves in has smooth surfaces and if they don't require special support. Additionally, only 20% of wheelchair recipients can use a chair without proper support. A qualified doctor must determine the requirements to ensure that the wheelchair is properly sized and has the proper cushioning and support to keep the wheelchair recipient from further damaging themselves. Craig is a wheelchair rider that has no sensation and knows this all too well. The cushion he uses costs over \$400, but it keeps him from getting sores that could put him in the hospital or even lead to death if not treated properly. Most children require special support and need special wheelchairs to ensure proper development. As a response to the awareness the Wheelchair Foundation has generated on the need for wheelchairs in less resourced settings and the flood of inexpensive wheelchairs, guidelines have been put in place by the world health organization.



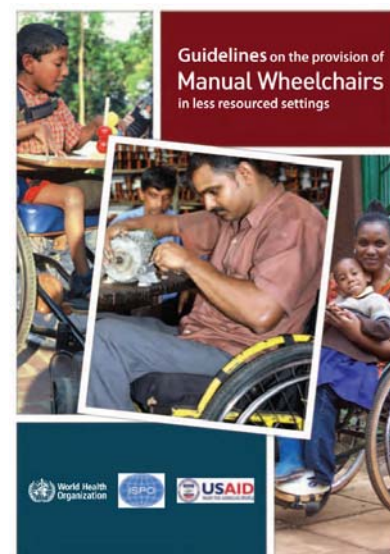
DESIGN & ENGINEERING STANDARDS

The World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for wheelchair provision in less resourced countries are:

A. Sustainability. The wheelchair must last at least 5 years in the environment that it is sent. Further it includes the following excerpts:

1. Reliable record keeping is essential for all phases of wheelchair provision including assessment, prescription, fitting, delivery and follow-up.
2. Regular follow-up/evaluation of outcomes of wheelchair provision should be performed.
3. Wheelchair services should be delivered by trained personnel.
4. The wheelchair services are encouraged to ensure that people with disabilities from all sectors of society are provided with appropriate wheelchairs including those from marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women and children.
5. Basic training should include safety, transfer, basic mobility/handling, basic maintenance, self care/pressure relief, who to contact if something goes wrong, impact/risk of self-modification
6. Local repair facilities must be available.
7. Regular provision of basic spare parts must be part of the service protocol
8. A re-assessment program, especially of users with progressing/changing conditions must be provided.

At the Rotary Club of Tulsa, Sunrise we have such a program that follows the guidelines of WHO. Tulsa, Sunrise has a wheelchair that is designed for the rigors of less resource countries. You will notice how the front wheels are moved forward. This is to keep the wheelchair rider from tipping forward. If one tips forward you have to break you fall with your hands, and a wheelchair rider needs their hands and wrists to propel themselves. And we have a program in place for responsible distribution and long term sustainability. This program was introduced by **Mobility International** at the District 6110 Conference in Rogers Arkansas in October 2009.



All Terrain Wheelchair

HEROINES TOO.

Another hero is Kathy Korge. She is the founder of the Red Thread Promise, a 501 (c) 3 Charitable organization. TRTP URL: www.redthreadpromise.org. Kathy has been instrumental in setting up a relationship with Mountain Top Ministries in Haiti. Mountain Top Ministries is an operation that trains Haitians how to be productive members of their society. We have plans in place to set up a wheelchair repair operation and a place where we can store spare parts under lock and key. We are currently performing a needs assessment to properly fit wheelchairs to those in need. Kathy is working tirelessly to make this a responsible endeavor where we can be sure that we are taking on a long term commitment that the wheelchair recipients will enjoy a new life of mobility. We understand the fact that they don't have the resources to make the repairs on their chairs. We will be seeking sponsors for wheelchair recipients so we can ensure that we keep the wheelchairs in service. Humanitarian service in Haiti is more than usually challenged. According to the US State Department, it is one of the poorest countries in the world.

On January 2nd Kathy Korge will be going to Haiti. She is going to be doing the ground work for the wheelchair project in Haiti and also will be teaching English as a Second Language.



Mountain Top Ministries



Mountain Top Ministries workshop

IN SUMMARY:

During this Christmas season we'll be thinking about the less fortunate that have challenges with mobility. Our organization understands that their purpose is to think of providing wheelchairs as a medical mission.

We understand that we are taking on a long term commitment and we will follow and exceed the guidelines set forth by the World Health Organization.

If you would like to be a supporter of Craig's retrofit project for broken Wheelchair Foundation wheelchairs please send a check to MSNI with the designation for that project.

If you would like to be a sustaining member that sponsors a wheelchair recipient for \$50 a year to ensure the wheelchair is maintained and the recipient stays mobile please make a designation that you are a sponsor.

If you would like to support the All Terrain Wheelchair project please send a check to MSNI with the ATW designation.

If you would like further information please feel free to contact me at steve@6110times.org.

Yours in Rotary Service and Merry Christmas!

Steven B. Reid
District 6110 Webmaster
District 6110 Communications Officer
District 6110 DaCdb Chairman